

WM  
27  
AM 4  
CG

## HOUSE....No. 139.

---

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

---

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, April 5, 1848.

✓ The Committee on Public Charitable Institutions, to whom were referred the several petitions to the legislature upon the subject of insanity, and their order thereupon, have considered the same, and herewith

**R E P O R T :**

That, after a full hearing of all the parties petitioning, and an interview with the trustees of the "state lunatic hospital," and, further, the opinion expressed by a correspondence with Dr. Woodward, past superintendent, and Dr. Chandler, present superintendent of that institution, the committee are impressed with the strongest convictions that some measure should be adopted, on the part of the Commonwealth, for more extended accommodation for those afflicted with this malady.

Various methods have been considered by the committee, in their deliberations to meet this increasing want. 1. Such as an enlargement of the present hospital at Worcester. 2. The removal of such patients from whom an income is now received. 3. An alteration in the present law, so modified that the removal of patients under the control of the trustees to the counties from which they were committed, should be restricted to

the demented subject, with a further provision, after such removal, that, should they become dangerously insane, the judicial power may exercise authority to recommit. 4. The expediency of the erection of another hospital in the western part of the state.

To the first, the committee believe that an enlargement of the hospital at Worcester would be impracticable, for the reason that it could not be done to the needed extent on the grounds there possessed, and would hazard much its being well controlled; be too onerous upon its superintendent, and adverse to the known opinion of intelligent and experienced minds, that too large a number should not congregate in such an asylum. Fifty in number is already at Worcester more than it has proper accommodation for.

2. Having patients removed from whom an income is derived, the committee would not encourage, for they think this class of patients, when convalescent, are exemplary to their associates there, and it gives a character to the institution in the public mind which it would not have were it a pauper institution, and it relieves the state in part from the burden of its support.

3. As to the alteration of the present law, the committee believe it would not be judicious to alter, for the hospital at Worcester would soon have a larger proportion than was ever intended of the furiously insane: a reasonable proportion however should be accommodated, for it is the settled conviction of all conversant with the treatment of this disease, that a well arranged and well conducted hospital should comprise patients of all stages of insanity, that the influences of each class upon the others may conduce for the good of all, lessen the labors of the government, as well as give them a better understanding of its degrees.

And 4,—Which the committee's attention was particularly directed to, by an order of the legislature to consider, they gave their attentive considerations. They think the location to be fixed upon requires more extended inquiry and more matured judgment than they can now give. One idea emanating from Dr. Bell, superintendant of the M'Lean Hospital, is worthy of



much consideration,—that of having a hospital exclusively for the Irish, (among whom the cases are numerous,) placed under the charge of an Irish superintendent and subordinate officers, subject however to the control of a board of trustees appointed as those at Worcester now are. This would be viewed favorable in that it might relieve the Worcester Hospital of their most troublesome patients, and remove the prevailing impression upon the minds of naturalized and adopted Irish citizens that they are not in the enjoyment of privileges granted to the native citizen; but to this the committee feel that one serious objection might arise, in that of its being too national in its character. The propriety of this would need much reflection.

The committee find that, by their present investigation, there is now believed to be within this Commonwealth three or four hundred insane, in its various stages, unprovided for, and upon many of which, conflicting claims arise, before committees of the legislature, upon allowance of support: still more, for many years past action has been proposed to meet the supposed difficulties as to what constitutes legal insanity, or, in other words, in what state of mind a person should be, to be considered a pauper, claiming protection of the Commonwealth.

These several propositions coming so forcibly to the committee's consideration, they deemed it most advisable, to insure satisfactory results, to propose the adoption of the following order.

For the Committee,

CHARLES EDWARD COOK.

---

*Ordered*, That ———, with such as the Senate may join, be a committee to whom shall be referred the whole subject connected with insanity within this Commonwealth, and that said committee be directed to consider during the recess of the legislature, and report at the early part of the next session, upon such measure best to be adopted by the Commonwealth,

